

Matthew: 7:22–29

From Catena Aurea:

21. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

22. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

23. And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

JEROME. As He had said above that those who have the robe of a good life are yet not to be received because of the impiety of their doctrines; so now on the other hand, He forbids us to participate the faith with those who while they are strong in sound doctrine, destroy it with evil works. For it behoves the servants of God that both their work should be approved by their teaching and their teaching by their works. And therefore He says, Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, enters into the kingdom of heaven.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. xxiv.) Wherein He seems to touch the Jews chiefly who placed every thing in dogmas; as Paul accuses them, If thou art called a Jew, and restest in the Law. (Rom. 2:17.)

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. in Mont. ii. 24.) For even in the very name of Christ we must be on our guard against heretics, and all that understand amiss and love this world, that we may not be deceived, and therefore He says, Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord. But it may fairly create a difficulty how this is to be reconciled with that of the Apostle, No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. (1 Cor. 12:3.) For we cannot say that those who are not to enter into the kingdom of heaven have the Holy Spirit. But the Apostle uses the word 'say,' to express the will and understanding of him that says it. He only properly says a thing, who by the sound of his voice expresses his will and purpose. But the Lord uses the word in its ordinary sense, for he seems to say who neither wishes nor understands what he says.

JEROME. For Scripture uses to take words for deeds; according to which the Apostle declares, They make confession that they know God, but in works deny him. (Tit. 1:16.)

AUGUSTINE. (non occ.) Let us not therefore think that this belongs to those fruits of which He had spoken above, when one says to our Lord, Lord, Lord; and thence seems to us to be a good tree; the true fruit spoken of is to do the will of God; whence it follows, But who doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.

HILARY. For obeying God's will and not calling on His name, shall find the way to the heavenly kingdom.

CHRYSOSTOM. He said not he that doth My will, but the will of my Father, for it was fit so to adapt it in the mean while to their weakness. But the one secretly implied the other, seeing the will of the Son is no other than the will of the Father.

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. in Mont. ii. 25.) Hereto it also pertains that we be not deceived by the name of Christ not only in such as bear the name and do not the deeds, but yet more by certain works and miracles, such as the Lord wrought because of the unbelieving, but yet warned us that we should not be deceived by such to suppose that there was invisible wisdom where was a visible miracle; wherefore He adds, saying, Many shall say to me in that day.

CHRYSOSTOM. See how He thus secretly brings in Himself. Here in the end of His Sermon He shews Himself as the Judge. The punishment that awaits sinners He had shewn before, but now only reveals who He is that shall punish, saying, Many shall say to me in that day.

HILARY. They even assure themselves of glory for their prophesying in teaching, for their casting out dæmons, for their mighty works; and hence promise themselves the kingdom of heaven, saying, Have we not prophesied in thy name?

CHRYSOSTOM. But there are that say that they spoke this falsely, and therefore were not saved. But they would not have dared to say this to the Judge in His presence. But the very answer and question prove that it was in His presence that they spoke thus. For having been here wondered at by all for the miracles which they wrought, and there seeing themselves punished, they say in wonderment, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? Others again say, that they did sinful deeds not while they thus were working miracles, but at a time later. But if this be so, that very thing which the Lord desired to prove would not be established, namely, that neither faith nor miracles avail ought where there is not

a good life; as Paul also declares, If I have faith that I may remove mountains, but have not charity, I am nothing. (1 Cor. 13:2.)

AUGUSTINE. (ubi sup.) Read also what things the Magi did in Egypt in withstanding Moses.

JEROME. Otherwise; To prophesy, to work wonders, to cast out dæmons by divine power, is often not of his deserts who performs the works, but either the invocation of Christ's name has this force; or it is suffered for the condemnation of those that invoke, or for the benefit of those that see and hear, that however they despise the men who work the wonders, they may give honour to God. So Saul and Balaam and Caiaphas prophesied; the sons of Sæva in the Acts of the Apostles were seen to cast out dæmons; and Judas with the soul of a traitor is related to have wrought many signs among the other Apostles.

CHRYSOSTOM. For all are not alike fit for all things; these are of pure life, but have not so great faith; those again have the reverse. Therefore God converted these by the means of those to the shewing forth much faith; and those that had faith He called by this unspeakable gift of miracles to a better life; and to that end gave them this grace in great richness. And they say, We have done many mighty works. But because they were ungrateful towards those who thus honoured them, it follows rightly, Then will I confess unto you, I never knew you.

JEROME. Emphatically, Then will I confess, for for long time He had forebore to say it.

CHRYSOSTOM. He says to them, I never knew you, as it were, not at the day of judgment only, but not even then when ye were working miracles. For there are many whom He has now in abhorrence, and yet turns away His wrath before their punishment.

JEROME. Note that He says, I never knew you, as being against some that say that all men have always been among rational creatures.^a

AUGUSTINE. (Cont. Adv. Leg. ii. 4.) But never let it be said as the Manichees say, that the Lord spoke these things concerning the holy Prophets; He spoke of those who after the preaching of His Gospel seem to themselves to speak in His name not knowing what they speak.

HILARY. But thus the hypocrites boasted, as though they spoke somewhat of themselves, and as though the power of God did not work all these things, being invoked; but reading has brought them the

knowledge of His doctrine, and the name of Christ casts out the dæmons. Out of our own selves then is that blessed eternity to be earned, and out of ourselves must be put forth something that we may will that which is good, that we may avoid all evil, and may rather do what He would have us do, than boast of that to which He enables us. These then He disowns and banishes for their evil works, saying, Depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

JEROME. He says not, Who have worked, but, who work iniquity, that He should not seem to take away repentance. Ye, that is, who up to the present hour when the judgment is come, though ye have not the opportunity, yet retain the desire of sinning.

7:24–27

24. Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

25. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

26. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

27. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

CHRYSOSTOM. Because there would be some who would admire the things that were said by the Lord, but would not add that shewing forth of them which is in action, He threatens them before, saying, Every man that hears these words of mine, and does them, shall be likened to a wise man.

JEROME. Or otherwise; On sand which is loose and cannot be bound into one mass, all the doctrine of heretics is built so as to fall.

HILARY. Otherwise; By the showers He signifies the allurements of smooth and gently invading pleasures, with which the faith is at first watered as with spreading rills, afterwards comes down the rush of torrent floods, that is, the motions of fiercer desire, and lastly, the whole force of the driving tempests rages against it, that is, the universal spirits of the Devil's reign attack it.

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. in Mont. in fin.) Otherwise; Rain, when it is put to denote any evil, is understood as the darkness of superstition; rumours of men are compared to winds; the flood signifies the lust of the flesh, as it were flowing over the land, and because what is brought on by prosperity is broken off by adversity. None of these things does he fear who has his house founded upon a rock, that is, who not only hears the command of the Lord, but who also does it. And in all these he submits himself to danger, who hears and does not. For no man confirms in himself what the Lord commands, or himself hears, but by doing it. But it should be noted, that when he said, He that heareth these words of mine, He shews plainly enough that this sermon is made complete by all those precepts by which the Christian life is formed, so that with good reason they that desire to live according to them, may be compared to one that builds on a rock.

7:28–29

28. And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine:

29. For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes.

GLOSS. (non occ.) Having related Christ's teaching, he shews its effects on the multitude, saying, And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these words, the multitude wondered at his doctrine.

AUGUSTINE. (De Cons. Ev. ii. 19.) From that which is here said, He seems to have left the crowd of disciples—those out of whom He chose twelve, whom He called Apostles—but Matthew omits to mention it. For to His disciples only, Jesus seems to have held this Sermon, which Matthew recounts, Luke omits. That after descending into a plain He held another like discourse, which Luke records, and Matthew omits. Still it may be supposed, that, as was said above, He delivered one and the same Sermon to the Apostles, and the rest of the multitude present, which has been recorded by Matthew and Luke, in different words, but with the same truth of substance; and this explains what is here said of the multitude wondering.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. xxv.) He adds the cause of their wonderment, saying, He taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes and Pharisees. But if the Scribes drove Him from them, seeing His power shewn in works, how would they not have been offended when words only manifested His power? But this was not so with the multitude; for being of benevolent temper, it is easily persuaded

by the word of truth. Such however was the power wherewith He taught them, that it drew many of them to Him, and caused them to wonder; and for their delight in those things which were spoken they did not leave Him even when He had done speaking; but followed Him as He came down from the mount. They were mostly astonished at His power, in that He spoke not referring to any other as the Prophets and Moses had spoken, but every where shewing that He Himself had authority; for in delivering each law, He prefaced it with, But I say unto you.

JEROME. For as the God and Lord of Moses himself, He of His own free will either added such things as seemed omitted in the Law, or even changed some; as above we read, It was said by them of old.... But I say unto you. But the Scribes only taught the people what was written in Moses and the Prophets.

HILARY. Or; They measure the efficacy of His power, by the might of His words.

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. in Mont. ii. 25. i. 10, et seq.) This is what is signified in the eleventh Psalm, I will deal mightily with him; the words of the Lord are pure words, silver tried in the fire, purified of earth, purged seven times. (Ps. 12:5, 6.) The mention of this number admonishes me here to refer all these precepts to those seven sentences that He placed in the beginning of this Sermon; those, I mean, concerning the beatitudes. For one to be angry with his brother, without cause, or to say to him, Racha, or call him fool, is a sin of extreme pride, against which is one remedy, that with a suppliant spirit he should seek pardon, and not be puffed up with a spirit of boasting. Blessed, then, are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. He is consenting to his adversary, that is, in shewing reverence to the word of God, who goes to the opening His Father's will, not with contentiousness of law, but with meekness of religion, therefore, Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Also whosoever feels carnal delight rebel against his right will, will cry out, O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? (Rom. 7:24.) And in thus mourning he will implore the aid of the consoler; whence, Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. What is there that can be thought of more toilsome than in overcoming an evil practice to cut off those members within us that hinder the kingdom of heaven, and not be broken down with the pain of so doing? To endure in faithful wedlock all things even the most grievous, and yet to avoid all accusation of fornication. To speak the truth, and approve it not by frequent oaths, but by probity of life. But who would be bold to endure such toils, unless he burned with the love of righteousness as with a hunger and thirst? Blessed, therefore, are they that hunger and thirst, for they shall be filled. Who can be ready to take wrong from the weak, to offer himself to any that asks him, to love his enemies, to do good to them that hate him,

to pray for them that persecute him, except he that is perfectly merciful? Therefore, Blessed are the merciful, for they shall find mercy. He keeps the eye of his heart pure, who places the end of his good actions not in pleasing men, nor in getting those things that are necessary to this life, and who does not rashly condemn any man's heart, and whatever he gives to another gives with that intention with which he would have others give to him. Blessed, therefore, are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. It must needs be moreover, that by a pure heart should be found out the narrow way of wisdom, to which the guile of corrupt men is an obstacle; Blessed are the peaceful, for they shall be called the sons of God. But whether we take this arrangement, or any other, those things which we have heard from the Lord must be done, if we would build upon the rock.

From Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture:

7:22–23 Depart from Me, Evildoers

I Never Knew You.

Cyril of Alexandria: There may be some who, in the beginning, believed rightly and assiduously labored at virtue. They may have even worked miracles and prophesied and cast out demons. And yet later they are found turning aside to evil, to self-assertive deception and desire. Of these Jesus remarks that he “never knew them.” He ranks them as equivalent to those who were never known by him at all. Even if they at the outset had lived virtuously, they ended up condemned. God knows those whom he loves, and he loves those who single-mindedly believe in him and do the things that please him. Fragment 88.

7:24 Building on Rock

Living with Security.

Chrysostom: Whereas his teaching has up to now largely focused on the future kingdom, its unspeakable rewards and its consolations, now he shifts his focus to the present life, its current fruits and how great is the strength of virtue within it. What then is its strength? It is living with security, not being easily overcome by any of life's terrors and standing above all those who treat others maliciously. What could be as good as this? For not even the one who wears the royal crown would be able to furnish this for himself. But one who pursues the way of excellence can have this stability, for that one alone is possessed of this equilibrium in full abundance. In the crashing surf of the present circumstances such a one

experiences a calm sea. This is amazing. It is when the storm is violent, the upheaval great and the temptations continual that such a person is not shaken in the slightest. This is not a way of living that applies to fair weather only. For he says, “The rain came down, the floods came, the winds blew, and they beat against that house. And it did not fall because it was founded upon the rock.”

In referring to rain, floods and winds Jesus is speaking about all those human circumstances and misfortunes, such as false accusations, plots, bereavements, deaths, loss of family members, insults from others, and all the horrid things in life about which one could speak. Jesus says that a soul that pursues the way of excellence does not give in to any of these potential disasters. And the cause of this is that this soul has been founded upon the rock.

Now “rock” refers to the reliability of Jesus’ teaching. For his commands are stronger than any rock. They place one quite above all the human waves of life. For the one who guards these commands with care will excel not only over human beings when treated maliciously but even over the demons themselves in their plots. The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 24.2.

7:25 A Solid House

Persecutions Accomplish Nothing.

Origen: “For neither death nor life nor angels nor other things can separate us from the love of Christ.” Neither can the flooding of rivers, as in the lands of Egypt and Assyria, do harm. Only those are harmed who build on sand, who practice the wisdom of the world. The winds that blow are like the false prophets. All these, coming together in one place, “beat upon” the house. If it is founded on rock, they do no harm. “The way of a snake upon a rock” is not to be found. But in the form of temptations and persecutions, which may mount into a flood, they beat upon even the one who seems to be well-founded. The house falls if it does not have Christ as its basis and foundation. But the truly wise person builds one’s house “upon a rock.” This is the way the Lord builds his church—upon the rock, with steadfastness and strength. This is why “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” All the persecutions that fall upon that house accomplish nothing. The house is founded upon the rock. Fragment 153.

7:26 Building on Sand

Punishment Instead of Benefit.

Chrysostom: And he was right in calling this one a fool, because what could be more brainless than building a house on the sand? For such a one endures the work of building but deprives oneself of the

fruit of one's labor and of relaxation, experiencing punishment instead of benefit. For it is surely clear to everyone that even those who follow a wicked path have to sweat in labor. Even the robber, the adulterer and the false accuser have to work and strain so that they can bring their evil to completion. But they not only reap no benefit at all from these labors but also experience much loss. For Paul was implying this when he said, "The one who sows to one's flesh will reap corruption from one's flesh." Who are these persons who build on the sand? Those who are given up to fornication, debauchery, drunkenness and anger—they are building on sand. The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 24.3.

7:27 Great Was Its Fall

The Floods Came.

Cyril of Alexandria: Spiritually understood, the one who rightly hears the word is contrasted with the builder who builds his house on sand. In time of temptation the house falls down. The onslaught of evil wind covers it with silt, and troubled waters flood into the soul. From this turbid flood stream of iniquity the house is shaken to its foundations. This should rouse us to become aware of the danger that comes in final judgment. Those who hear the Lord's words are like a wise man building on rock. Those who do not follow the Lord's words are likened to a foolish man building on sand. One who practices virtue is made thoroughly able "through Christ who strengthens him." We receive everything from God who puts things right. From him comes wisdom and insight and union with all that is good. The bad person cannot claim God as cause of his own wickedness and stupidity. He makes himself like the fool when he withdraws from that which proceeds according to nature. He then turns toward what is unnatural. Fragment 89.

7:28–29 Teaching with Authority

Love and Authority.

Chrysostom: Surely it was logical that they were in pain over the heavy weight of what he had said. They were stunned by the soaring level of the requirements that he had made. But now the strength of the one teaching was so great that he seized many of them and threw them into great amazement. Because of their pleasure in what he said, Jesus finally persuaded them not to leave as he finished speaking. For not even after he went down from the mountain did the hearers leave, but even then the whole audience followed him because of the great love that was shown in what he had said. But most of all they were astounded at his authority. For when he said these things, he did not refer to another, as even the prophet Moses did, but everywhere he showed that he himself was the One who had the authority to decide. For

even when he was establishing laws Jesus continually added, "But I say to you." And when he was reminding them of the final day of judgment, he showed that he himself is the One who will bring justice, both through the punishments and through the honors. This is what made such a commotion among them. The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 25.1.